

Questions – The Big Sleep - Raymond Chandler (1888 - 1959)

1) How much personal information do you learn about Philip Marlowe? (p. 10)

2) Can you describe this private eye's code of conduct?

3) The image of knights recurs several times throughout *The Big Sleep* (p. 3-4; 156; 209).

- Is Marlowe an idealistic romantic?
- When Marlowe sees the stained-glass panel in General Sternwood's main hallway with the image a dark knight rescuing a lady, he remarks: "*I stood there and thought that if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him. He didn't seem to really be trying*" (p. 3-4).
  - What does this reveal about Marlowe's personality?
- Much later, contemplating a chess board, Marlowe thinks: "*The move with the knight was wrong. I put it back where I had moved it from. It wasn't a game for knights*" (p. 156).
  - Has Marlowe's ethics fundamentally changed, or can these contradictory statements be reconciled?

4) Why do you think Philip Marlowe is such a cynical, wise-cracker?

5) Why does Marlowe like General Sternwood even though, at one point, he says, "To hell with the rich. They make me sick."?

6) Why does General Sternwood like his bootlegging son-in-law Rusty Regan? (p. 10-11)

7) What distinguishes the two sisters in this novel?

8) Why does Marlowe tear apart his bed after Carmen's visit?

9) Raymond Chandler has been accused of being a misogynist and a chauvinist.

- Do you see any evidence for this in *The Big Sleep*?
- Is it even fair or legitimate to judge Raymond Chandler's personal morality or ethics? Why, or why not?

10) How does Chandler depict Los Angeles? How much do his descriptions of Los Angeles match your current perception of modern day Los Angeles and Hollywood?